QUIET ON THE SET

issue number one • spring 2002

poetry begins in trivial metaphors, petty metaphors, "grace" metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest thinking that we have. poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another. people say, "why don't you say what you mean?" we never do that, do we, being all of us too much poets. we like to talk in parables and hints and in indirections — whether from diffidence or some other instinct.

— robert frost

the whole underground zine culture may well be the most important thing punk rock ever gave the world, even more so than all the cool music.

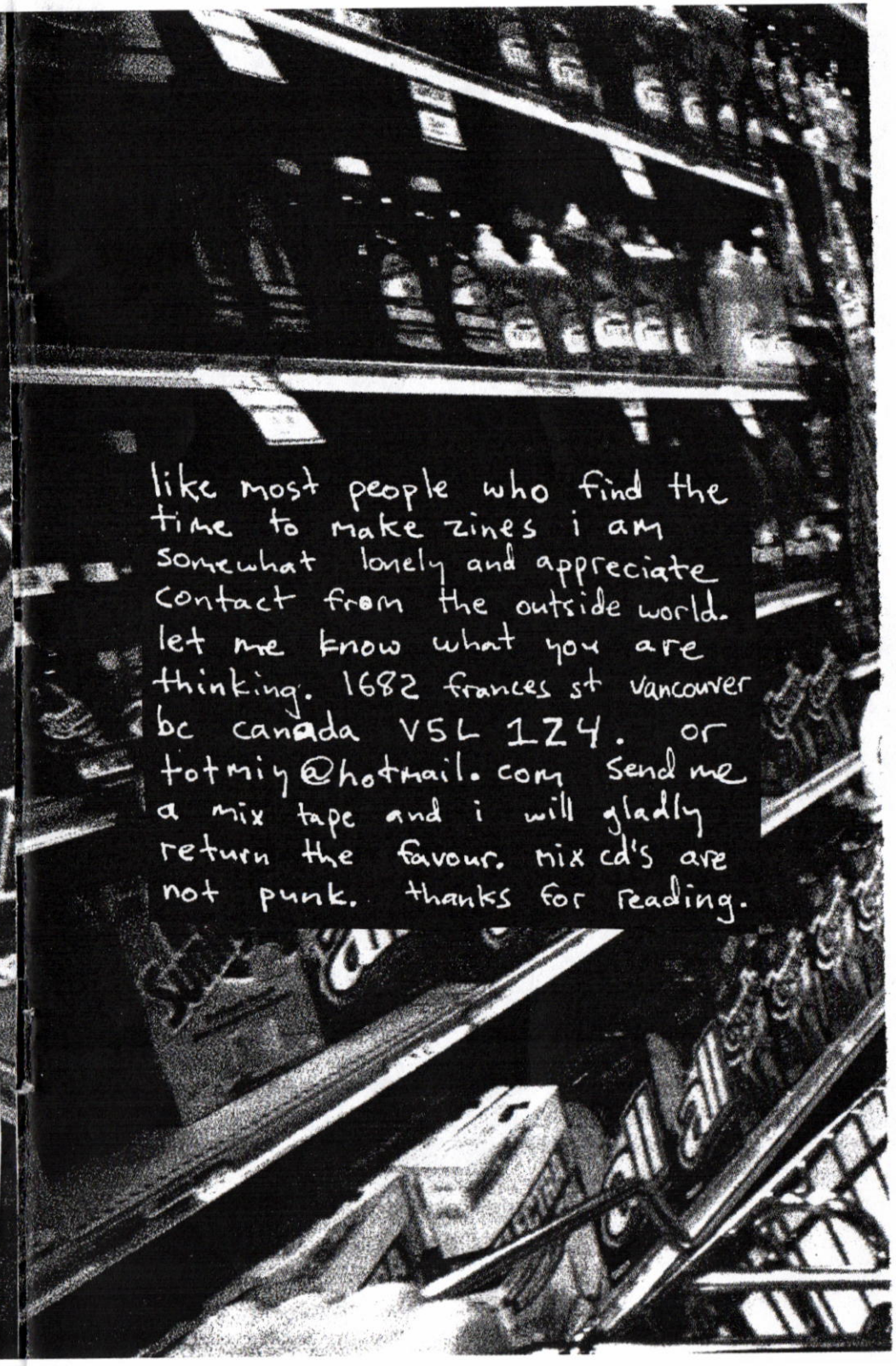
— jello biafra

we usually track live and play all together. on a couple of the records, a lot of the guitar tracks had just one live take. sometimes we fix 'em, sometimes we don't. i'm actually a fan of imperfection. i look for performance, not perfection.

— ian mackaye

the only thing missing is you premiere collector's issue by eric axen may 2002
emotastic cover photo (harley-davidson shop) by olivia pojar uberphallic back photo (world's largest kubasa sausage) by chris mitchell bowling photos by greg lulashnyk
other images stolen from random sources this is night reading wait until it's dark

inspiration: against me, cap'n jazz, the epidemic, ruination, andre's last chance, lifetime, a luna red, elliot, submission hold, the replacements, the attack, choke, spitboy, braid, jc, conation, do make say think. burn collector, heartbreak stomachache/c.p.a.b. split zine, days of war nights of love, armadillo, men speaking out on men and sexism, the result #3, another industrial product of immaturity. easy rider, kids in the hall, scanners, the adventures of sebastian cole, gods and monsters, the shining, a fish called wanda, fearless vampire killers, amelie, william weyman: selected video works. comox kids.



like most people who find the time to make zines i am somewhat lonely and appreciate contact from the outside world. let me know what you are thinking. 1682 frances st vancouver bc canada V5L 1Z4. or totmiy@hotmail.com send me a mix tape and i will gladly return the favour. mix cd's are not punk. thanks for reading.

bicycle **summer.** how come every **time**

the **season** changes it brings along a **flood**

of **memories?** and every other **record**

makes me wish it was the **past.** our lives are

so **beautiful** but i can never **see** beyond the

shame. these **days** when they mention you

i just **act** like it's okay. if **i could** remember

everything you gave to me then **you** could

forget everything i **said.** only if **all** was

forgotten would i wish to **speak** again.

(thoughts on gothic bowling and zines)





the daylight savings sun has set and i'm left sitting in my room, listening to local hip-hop and calculating the rate at which my black nail polish has chipped away since friday. aside from a handfull of polaroids and a closet sporting a few more black threads than before, this is the only remaining evidence i have of the night we decided it would be a good idea to dress up like goths and cruise on over to commodore lanes.

maggie, approaching a full month without cigarettes or alcohol, said that she's starting to see why straight edge kids do what they do. always starting bands, writing zines, finding silly new ways of entertaining themselves.

we looked at ourselves in the mirror. we looked dead. - i thought about maggie's comment and decided that while i've never fancied the idea of "going edge", i've also never wanted to be someone who habitually celebrates the end of the week by getting drunk, drowning their frustrations into silence before slavishly starting all over again.

keep going→

we got a lot of stares that night, and for a few minutes i was genuinely paranoid about being the subject of a righteous gay-bashing... andrew and i meticulously fixing our makeup before a burger king washroom mirror, not sure of what the next whopper-consuming bloke would think of it all.

i can't say for sure why i'm making a zine. maybe it's my ego, maybe it's my desire to feel alive by means other than depriving my brain of oxygen. liv wrote in issue #2 of the result, "i realize that i enjoy reading other people's works. 'zines', stories, lyrics. i love when my friends tell me stories about their lives. i want to know where they came from, who they are, what they love, what they want. i discover similarities in their stories to my own stories. it's building a sense of community."

i figure my own reasons are very much the same. i often feel as if i have nothing valuable or original to say, to contribute, and maybe doing a zine will help me overcome that as well. even if a thousand kids have said these exact same things before me, i still want to hear them. i want to hear what everyone around me has to say, for it to inspire me, and for me to inspire others in return. it's building a sense of community.



i caught the b-line back home, lugging on board my ridiculously large new purchase. i sat near the back and waited for the guy next to me to get off, then moved into his seat and placed the portfolio on edge, neatly tucked away between the side of the seat and the back-of-the-bus divider thing. i looked around, hoping some of the other passengers would be watching me, impressed by my stunning ingenuity, but no one seemed interested. this is exactly what i hate about bus riders: no team unity.

i arrived home and wedged open my bedroom door, making room for the portfolio amongst the piles of random papers, crumpled, folded and torn. "is this it?" i wondered to myself. "is this the reason i haven't been able to keep a clean room for the last 20 years? because i haven't owned one of these things? or perhaps i'm just too lazy to clean my room, or too distractable, or depressed, or maybe too artistic. so artistic that i don't even draw, or paint, or take pictures even. what if the portfolio doesn't work? what if i'm never able to keep a clean bedroom?

i'm still asking myself these questions, and to be honest this is the kind of stuff that falls into uncharted and uninviting mental territory.* on a brighter note, i'm feeling a lot more sleep-like, my coffee jitters have subsided and i think it's time for a second round in tonight's match between insomnia and yours truly. i'm going to press play on my stereo again, ensuring that i'll have trouble dozing off completely for around 40 more minutes, though at least i'll be thinking pleasant thoughts for that duration of time. d.i.y. tends to evoke memories of high school summers, old crushes and nights spent reflecting and fruitlessly attempting to clean my room. goodnight everybody, i'm off to bed.

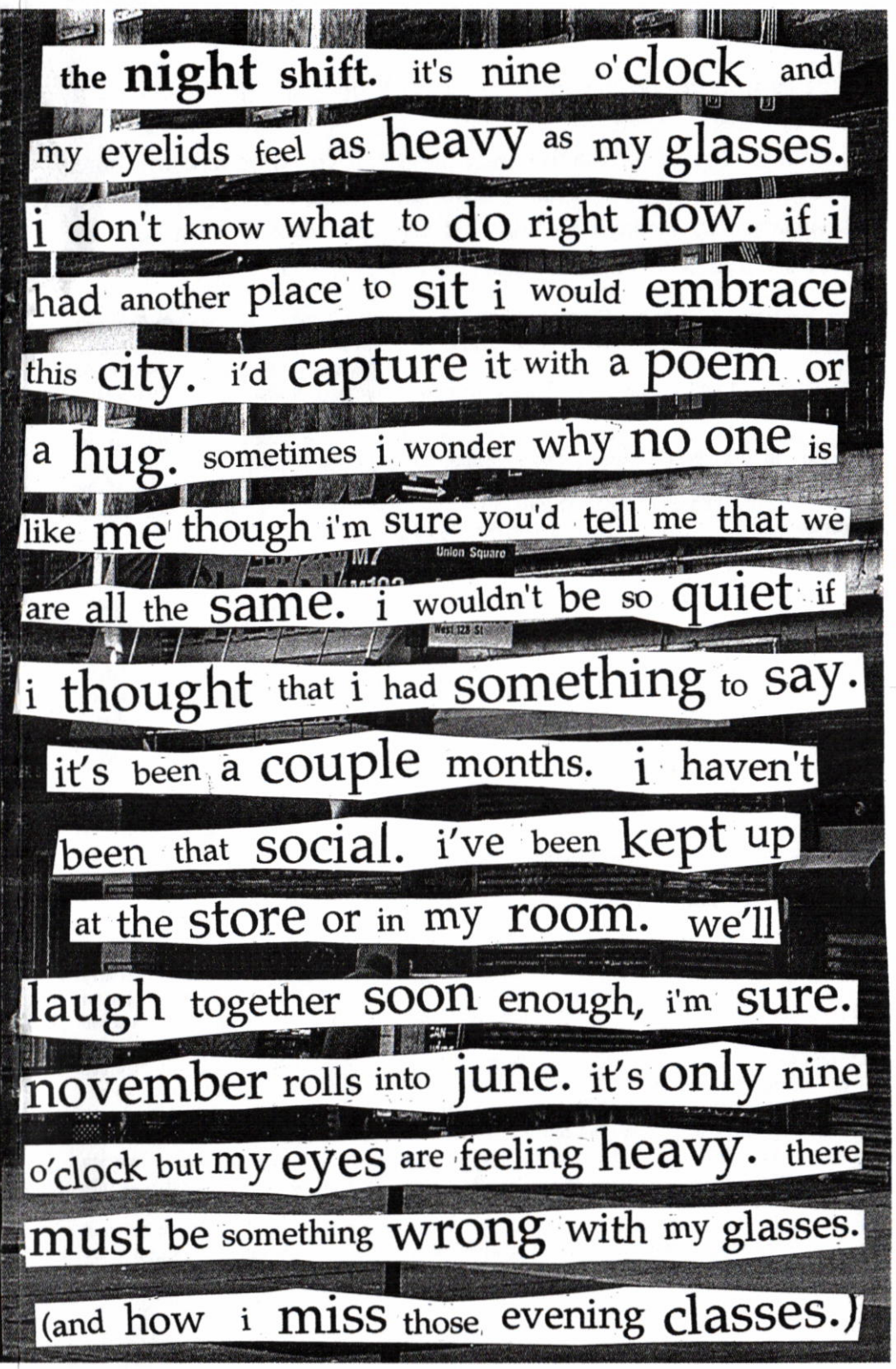
*"it's true, eric's problems are complete bullshit" -john young

and once again i can't sleep. sometimes it's anxiety, sometimes my body's off schedule, sometimes i've just had too much caffeine. tonight seems to be a combination of the three, and even though i can't sleep to music i popped in a cd (d.b.s.– "some boys got it", an aural security blanket if there ever was one) just to keep my mind from wandering into uncharted and uninviting territory.

the day was spent largely in this same mental state: overtired, confused, curious, sketchy. i bussed out to granville island in the rain because apparently it's the only part of town where one can purchase an art portfolio, let alone a cheap one. don't get me wrong, i don't draw or paint or even own a camera, at least not one that i could locate in my bedroom. i "need" a portfolio to stash posters and newspaper cutouts that i find visually stimulating, but won't quite fit into a file cabinet or rubbermaid container without extensive folding or cutting. i'm quite the packrat when it comes to images, never knowing when i'll be making another show flier, birthday card or, as the situation has it, zine.

i hadn't been to granville island for exactly one year, and not for ages before that. who knew that it was the home of the emily carr institute, plus my friend's workplace, plus radio berlin artwork? "help, i'm trapped in an album cover" was all i could think as i wandered through the tunnel.

i felt like a poseur in the art supplies store, as though i was instantly recognizable as a "non-artiste". i meekly asked a punk rock looking girl where i could find portfolios, and subsequently pointed to the cheapest, flimsiest, and least durable of them all, so as to minimize both pretension and the possibility of her asking just what, exactly, i needed it for. "why would they care?" i asked myself. i brought the glorified chunk of cardboard over to the till, inaudibly informing another employee that i was ready to pay. $23.54, or $23.50 if i had "exact" change – they wouldn't accept pennies. i almost felt ripped off that i couldn't ditch some of the worthless dead weight in my wallet, though her unexpected enthusiasm as i handed over the correct amount of currency seemed to make up for my loss.

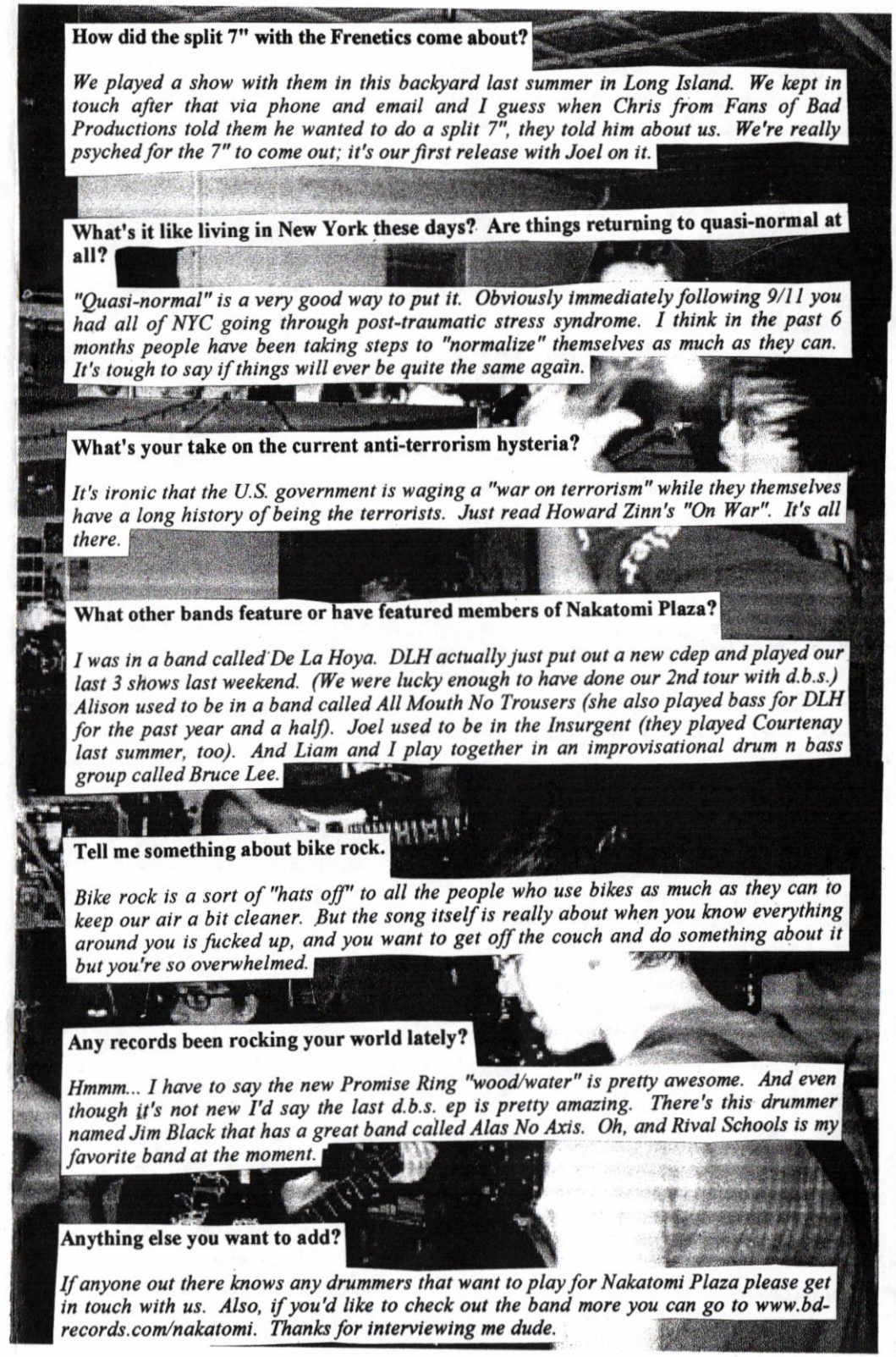


This is an essay on the 1989 invasion of Panama that I wrote for a history class. It reads like a college term paper because that's exactly what it is. I removed the footnotes, though if you want to know more I suggest checking out *What Uncle Sam Really Wants* or *Deterring Democracy* by Noam Chomsky. If you can track down a copy of Barbara Trent's documentary that is excellent as well.

On December 21, 1989, the United States deployed over 20,000 troops to invade Panama: the beginning of what would be dubbed "Operation Just Cause". President Bush initially gave four reasons for the invasion. First, the lives of Americans in Panama were said to be threatened. Second, the fate of the Panama Canal was allegedly at stake. Third, democracy needed to be restored in Panama; and fourth, General Manuel Noriega needed to be captured and brought to justice, what promised to be a "major victory" in the war on drugs. In the years following the invasion, however, many people would come to question the sincerity of these concerns, as well as the overall legality and morality of the intervention. With evidence surfacing of mass civilian casualties, Operation Just Cause was becoming, in essence, harder and harder to justify.

The pretext that troops must be sent in order to protect American lives was as questionable as it was inconsistent. The White House claimed there had been "literally hundreds of cases of harassment and abuse of Americans," though only a few specific examples were commonly given. One involved a U.S. soldier who was killed earlier that month, after his car had driven "through a military roadblock near a sensitive military area". The Panamanian side of the story was that he and other American officers had opened fire, injuring a soldier and two civilians before attempting to run the roadblock. Another case involved alleged threats to the wife of an officer who had been arrested and beaten, presented by the Bush administration without supporting evidence. The *New York Times* reported that Bush "often has difficulty in emotionally charged situations, but his deep feelings clearly came through" while stating his refusal to let American womanhood be threatened. Such deep feelings had not been expressed when an American nun had been kidnapped, tortured, and sexually abused by Guatemalan police just weeks earlier, nor would they resurface after two American Sisters were killed by terrorists in Nicaragua on January 1, 1990.

While the Panama Canal was undoubtedly a much more real area of American concern, if not their only real concern, the issues surrounding it were not presented in a particularly honest fashion. President Bush informed Americans that although there had been no direct threats to close it, deteriorating relations between the U.S. and Panamanian governments meant a higher risk of canal traffic being disrupted. In fact, concerns most certainly related to the controversial Carter-Torrijos treaties of 1977. A result of these treaties was that on New Year's Day 1990, much of the administration of the American-funded Panama Canal was scheduled to pass into Panama's hands. In 2000, it would go completely to them. As well, all fourteen American Southern Command bases in Panama were to be closed by 1999, making military access to the rest of Latin America increasingly difficult. A curious poll taken two weeks after the invasion showed that 82% of Panamanian patriots did not want national control of the canal. As an article in Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting's Extra! publication points out, "A 'public opinion poll' in a country under martial law, conducted by an agency obviously sanctioned by the invading forces, can be expected to come up with such results."



How did the split 7" with the Frenetics come about?

We played a show with them in this backyard last summer in Long Island. We kept in touch after that via phone and email and I guess when Chris from Fans of Bad Productions told them he wanted to do a split 7", they told him about us. We're really psyched for the 7" to come out; it's our first release with Joel on it.

What's it like living in New York these days? Are things returning to quasi-normal at all?

"Quasi-normal" is a very good way to put it. Obviously immediately following 9/11 you had all of NYC going through post-traumatic stress syndrome. I think in the past 6 months people have been taking steps to "normalize" themselves as much as they can. It's tough to say if things will ever be quite the same again.

What's your take on the current anti-terrorism hysteria?

It's ironic that the U.S. government is waging a "war on terrorism" while they themselves have a long history of being the terrorists. Just read Howard Zinn's "On War". It's all there.

What other bands feature or have featured members of Nakatomi Plaza?

I was in a band called De La Hoya. DLH actually just put out a new cdep and played our last 3 shows last weekend. (We were lucky enough to have done our 2nd tour with d.b.s.) Alison used to be in a band called All Mouth No Trousers (she also played bass for DLH for the past year and a half). Joel used to be in the Insurgent (they played Courtenay last summer, too). And Liam and I play together in an improvisational drum n bass group called Bruce Lee.

Tell me something about bike rock.

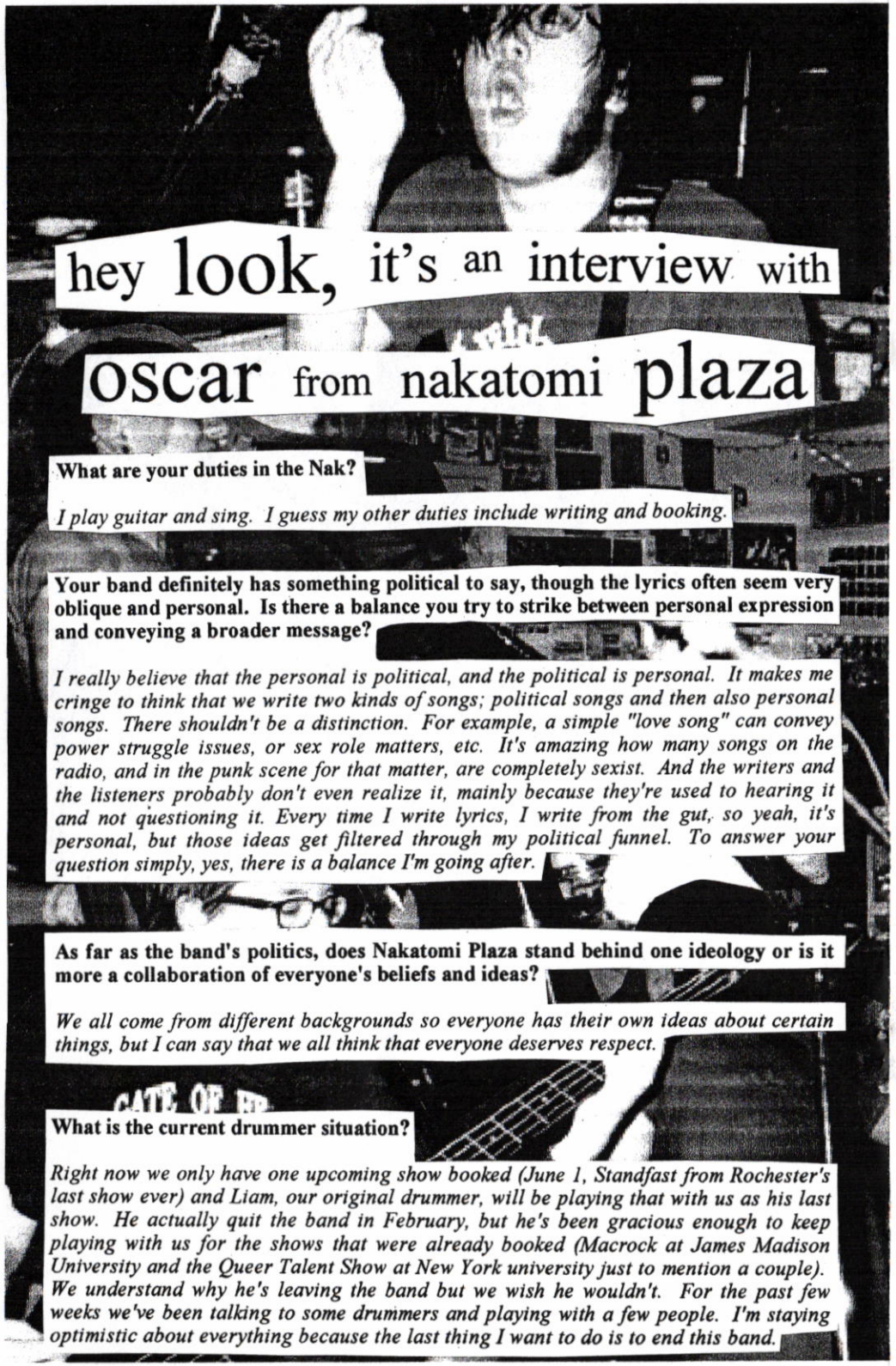
Bike rock is a sort of "hats off" to all the people who use bikes as much as they can to keep our air a bit cleaner. But the song itself is really about when you know everything around you is fucked up, and you want to get off the couch and do something about it but you're so overwhelmed.

Any records been rocking your world lately?

Hmmm... I have to say the new Promise Ring "wood/water" is pretty awesome. And even though it's not new I'd say the last d.b.s. ep is pretty amazing. There's this drummer named Jim Black that has a great band called Alas No Axis. Oh, and Rival Schools is my favorite band at the moment.

Anything else you want to add?

If anyone out there knows any drummers that want to play for Nakatomi Plaza please get in touch with us. Also, if you'd like to check out the band more you can go to www.bd-records.com/nakatomi. Thanks for interviewing me dude.



hey look, it's an interview with oscar from nakatomi plaza

What are your duties in the Nak?

I play guitar and sing. I guess my other duties include writing and booking.

Your band definitely has something political to say, though the lyrics often seem very oblique and personal. Is there a balance you try to strike between personal expression and conveying a broader message?

I really believe that the personal is political, and the political is personal. It makes me cringe to think that we write two kinds of songs; political songs and then also personal songs. There shouldn't be a distinction. For example, a simple "love song" can convey power struggle issues, or sex role matters, etc. It's amazing how many songs on the radio, and in the punk scene for that matter, are completely sexist. And the writers and the listeners probably don't even realize it, mainly because they're used to hearing it and not questioning it. Every time I write lyrics, I write from the gut, so yeah, it's personal, but those ideas get filtered through my political funnel. To answer your question simply, yes, there is a balance I'm going after.

As far as the band's politics, does Nakatomi Plaza stand behind one ideology or is it more a collaboration of everyone's beliefs and ideas?

We all come from different backgrounds so everyone has their own ideas about certain things, but I can say that we all think that everyone deserves respect.

What is the current drummer situation?

Right now we only have one upcoming show booked (June 1, Standfast from Rochester's last show ever) and Liam, our original drummer, will be playing that with us as his last show. He actually quit the band in February, but he's been gracious enough to keep playing with us for the shows that were already booked (Macrock at James Madison University and the Queer Talent Show at New York university just to mention a couple). We understand why he's leaving the band but we wish he wouldn't. For the past few weeks we've been talking to some drummers and playing with a few people. I'm staying optimistic about everything because the last thing I want to do is to end this band.

The idea of Operation Just Cause as an exercise in restoring Panamanian democracy had some vital flaws as well. While the country certainly wasn't democratic, it hadn't been for quite some time, with Noriega as the effective ruler since taking over as commander of armed forces in 1983. 1984 saw the "ultranationalist" Arnulfo Arias win Panama's presidential election, as well as Nicolas Ardito Barletta usurp the position thanks to considerable violence and fraud. Arranged by both Noriega and the U.S. Government, the fraudulent election was praised by American Secretary of State George Shultz as "initiating the process of democracy". As the decade progressed, however, Noriega began showing signs of independence, interfering with American business interests and showing reluctance in helping with the U.S.-Nicaragua Contras war. The U.S. began taking actions against Noriega, imposing illegal sanctions in 1988 and backing an unsuccessful coup attempt in October 1989. The 1989 election had again been stolen, this time from U.S.-backed business representative Guillermo Endara. Suddenly, the American press voiced outrage over Noriega's undemocratic practices, passionately denouncing his human rights record despite it being relatively clean next to other U.S. clients in the area.

What sealed Noriega's fate as an arch villain to America was his recently publicized involvement in the drug trade. If captured and brought to justice, at least as far as Bush's logic ran, drug trafficking in Central America would be dealt a serious blow. The U.S. government had in fact been aware of Noriega's drug connections as far back as 1972, yet he stayed on the CIA payroll, stealing elections and supporting the Contras war much to American delight. It wasn't until 1988 that he was indicted by the U.S., with only one alleged trafficking incident postdating 1984. In 1986, the Director of the Drug Enforcement Agency had actually praised Noriega "for the vigorous anti-drug trafficking policy that [he had] adopted." If America's position in the drug war seemed unclear, a close look at those slated to replace Noriega would not have resolved the picture. Endara, who would be installed as president after the invasion, had been arrested in April 1989 for conspiring to import more than half a ton of cocaine per month into the United States. The vice president, attorney general, and treasury minister under Endara all had histories of involvement in drug trafficking or money laundering. Not surprisingly, trafficking did not decrease with the overthrowing of Noriega.

In terms of legality, Operation Just Cause was doubtful at best. The *Wall Street Journal* called the subject "murky". *ABC World News Tonight* reported that "as far as international law is concerned, even sources in the U.S. government admit they were operating very near the line." United Nations ambassador Thomas Pickering was somewhat more blunt, condemning the invasion as a "flagrant violation of international law and of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states."

But what made the Operation infinitely more objectionable was its impact on civilians, as well as the decision to employ unnecessarily powerful and sophisticated new weaponry. As the invasion came to a close, Congress mourned the loss of 23 American lives, while the media's estimation of civilian casualties seldomly exceeded 600. Latin American sources painted a much grimmer picture. A joint delegation between the Costa Rica-based Central American Human Rights Commission and the Panamanian Human Rights Commission published a report in which estimates of 2-3000 civilians killed were considered "conservative". Based on numerous interviews, the report gave eyewitness accounts of U.S. helicopters aiming their fire at buildings with only civilian occupants, a U.S. tank destroying a public bus killing 26 passengers, American troops shooting at ambulances, and civilian residences being burned to the ground. Various sources refer to mass common graves. Highly sophisticated weapons were often used when almost

anything would have sufficed; Panama boasted a national army smaller than the New York City Police Department. In explaining the use of F-117A stealth fighters to bomb a scarcely defended military base that did not even have radar, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney noted that "the operation can be used by the Air Force to justify the huge investment made in stealth technology" to "an increasingly skeptical Congress." Some Panamanians described the American use of laser weapons during the invasion: one family recalled "an intense white light" come through their apartment window and "explode whatever object it hit," while several people said they had seen "a Panamanian soldier killed by a laser beam." The U.S. insists that lasers were only used by the Air Force to pinpoint targets, though the mere speculation otherwise seems to act as the nail in the coffin, killing the chance of the words "Operation Just Cause" resonating as anything more than a sad example of Orwellian irony.

The mainstream media did a very good job alongside the Bush administration in selling the invasion to Americans. One way in which they did so was by showing clips of only Panamanians whose interests rested with the Endara government, thus giving the impression that most of the country's inhabitants were supportive of the United States. Day after day, the same light skinned, well-dressed, English-speaking people were shown welcoming the Americans as a liberating force, despite the fact that Panama's population is largely black and mestizo, Spanish-speaking, and poor. Attempts at even the pretense of neutrality or the separation of press and state were largely abandoned; television anchors and journalists favored using terms like "we" and "us" to describe advancements in the mission. Often official U.S. accounts were virtually presented as news, with reporters conceding that they had little else to go on. In Barbara Trent's 1992 documentary *The Panama Deception*, several sequences were cleverly meshed together to show the almost identical language used by Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings and others to describe the invasion and its implications on the American people. The film was shown in theaters throughout the U.S. and even won an Academy Award, effectively raising public consciousness of the truth behind Just Cause. Another technique the film employed was the juxtaposition of official commentary by government spokespeople and actual footage of the invasion and its aftermath. The wide discrepancies suggested that lies surrounded almost every aspect of the mission: what targets were bombed, what methods were used, the number of civilian casualties, and the long-term impact on the people of Panama.

In short, the real reasons behind the 1989 invasion were not the same as those presented by President Bush. Whatever the true concerns were -- prolonged American control over the Panama Canal, rationalization of a huge military budget in the midst of an ending Cold War, or the desire to "reverse Bush's image as a wimp," as one ex-CIA analyst put it -- the price paid by the Panamanian people was unjustifiably large. It would be difficult to think of a more undeserving title than "Operation Just Cause", but in a way the term's gross distortion of truth makes this a fascinating case study in government dishonesty and media manipulation. It's enough to invoke the pattern of thought that with a bit more awareness, with a few more activists and filmmakers such as Barbara Trent, North Americans might one day be forced to take a good look at their media and question the powers that shape their governments' foreign policies.



anti-g8 protester murdered by police
genoa, italy - july 2001